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THE U.S. ARMY IN BERLIN (U)
1945 - 1961

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UNITED STATES ARMY, EUROPE
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1962

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Chapter 5

The Years of Intensifying Crisis (U)

17. (U) The Soviets Suggest a Peace Treaty

In January 1959 the Soviet Union submitted to the three Western Allies the draft of a proposed peace treaty with Germany and stated its intention of convening in Warsaw or Prague, within two months, a conference of representatives of the countries—29 by their count—that had been associated in the war against Germany, to consider the draft and sign an agreed-upon text. It assumed that representatives of both the Federal Republic of Germany and the "German Democratic Republic" would participate for Germany. Included in the treaty draft was another proposal for converting West Berlin into a demilitarized free city "until the re-establishment of the unity of Germany."¹

In February the Western Allies, reiterating that a peace treaty could be negotiated only with a united Germany, stated in reply that they were ready to participate in a four-power conference at the ministerial level, at a time and place to be fixed by mutual agreement, to deal with the German problem in all of its aspects. They suggested that German "advisers" be invited to the conference and consulted. At the same time they reaffirmed their stand against the unilateral abdication of responsibilities and obligations in Berlin, and stressed that they would uphold, by all appropriate means, their right of access to Berlin and their communications with their sectors.²

¹"Note from the Soviet Union to the United States, Transmitting a Draft Peace Treaty for Germany, January 10, 1959," in Documents, cited above, pp. 350-70. UNCLAS.

²"Note from the American Embassy to the Soviet Foreign Ministry, February 16, 1959," in Documents, cited above, p. 382. UNCLAS.

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18. (U) The Foreign Ministers' Conference of 1959

Although the Soviets seemed anxious for either a multi-nation conference on the one hand or four-power summit talks on the other,³ they agreed to a foreign ministers' conference, to be held at Geneva.⁴ This conference began on 11 May 1959, with representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany and the East German regime present as advisers, and continued—with a 4-week recess—for almost 3 months.

a. The Western Plan. Holding that agreement concerning Berlin should apply to the whole of Berlin, and not merely to West Berlin as proposed by the U.S.S.R., the Western Allies proposed the reunification of Berlin as the first step in, and a pattern for, the reunification of Germany as a whole.⁵ As part of the first phase of their peace plan they proposed that Berlin should be made a single city belonging to all of Germany. This was to be achieved through the free election, under quadripartite or United Nations supervision, of a council that would administer the entire city of Berlin. As the future capital of a reunified Germany, Berlin would be guaranteed by the Four Powers, who would continue to be entitled to station troops there.

As the second phase, the Four Powers would set up a mixed German committee of Federal Republic of Germany and "German Democratic Republic" representatives to formulate and submit to a plebiscite, in all parts of Germany, a draft law providing for Germany-wide, free, and secret elections, under independent supervision. If the law was agreed to by the plebiscite, free elections of an all-German assembly would follow, as Phase III of the plan. This assembly would have as one task the drafting of an all-German constitution as the basis of an all-German Government that would replace the government of the Federal Republic of Germany and that of the so-called German Democratic Republic; and this government would negotiate an all-German peace treaty as soon as possible thereafter. After conclusion of the peace treaty, a final peace settlement

³ "Note from the Soviet Union to the United States, on a German Peace Treaty, March 2, 1959," in Documents, cited above, pp. 383-9. UNCLAS.

⁴ "Note from the American Embassy to the Soviet Foreign Ministry, Proposing a Foreign Ministers Meeting at Geneva, March 26, 1959," in Documents, cited above, pp. 409-10. UNCLAS.

⁵ "Statement at Geneva by Secretary of State Herter, Presenting the Western Peace Plan, May 14, 1959," in Documents on Germany, cited above, pp. 457-61. UNCLAS.

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and the withdrawal of non-German military forces would be worked out.⁶

b. The Soviet Plan. The U.S.S.R. rejected this plan at once and presented its own plan, calling for the immediate negotiation of a peace treaty with "the two Germans."⁷ The Western Powers rejected this plan because it would formalize the division of Germany and tend to make its partition permanent. Meanwhile, Premier Khrushchev repeatedly threatened to draft and sign a separate peace treaty with the East Germans which would give them sovereign rights over all of East Germany, including all of Berlin.

c. The Impasse Concerning Berlin. During the course of the conference a number of proposals and counter-proposals were made concerning Berlin. Taking note of a stated decision of the Soviet Union to withdraw its military forces from East Berlin—but not from East Germany—the Western Allies proposed that their forces in West Berlin be limited to the existing levels. If developments permitted, a reduction of forces might be considered from time to time.⁸ The Soviet Union rejected the reference to its projected troop withdrawal and, although the Western Allied forces in Berlin were less than 2 percent as large as the Soviet forces surrounding them, proposed their drastic reduction to only "symbolic" contingents.⁹ Charging, moreover, that the United States was using West Berlin for the release of violent anti-Soviet propaganda, the Soviet Union proposed a four-power commission to supervise and assure the implementation of extensive restraints on West Berlin without any

6(1) "Western Peace Plan, Presented at Geneva by the Foreign Ministers of France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, May 14, 1959." (2) "Statement at Geneva by Secretary of State Herter, on Western Proposals Regarding Berlin, May 26, 1959." Both in Documents on Germany, cited above, pp. 461-5; 507-12. Both UNCLAS.

7(1) "Statement at Geneva by Foreign Minister Gromyko, Presenting the Soviet Draft Peace Treaty with Germany, May 15, 1959." (2) "Soviet Draft Peace Treaty with Germany Presented at the Foreign Ministers' Meeting at Geneva, May 15, 1959." Both in Documents on Germany, cited above, pp. 465-87. Both UNCLAS.

8"Western Proposal on Berlin, Handed to Foreign Minister Gromyko at Geneva on June 16, 1959," in Documents on Germany, cited above, pp. 538-9. UNCLAS.

9"Statement at Geneva by Foreign Minister Gromyko, Presenting a Soviet Proposal on Berlin, June 19, 1959," in Documents on Germany, cited above, pp. 539-40. UNCLAS.

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corresponding inspection in East Berlin.¹⁰ The Western Allies proposed instead that the United Nations be invited to send a staff to Berlin to report, to the Secretary General, any propaganda activities that disturbed public order, seriously affected the rights and interests of others, or amounted to interference in the internal affairs of others. The U.S.S.R. rejected this proposal.

When this conference, after a recess from 20 June to 13 July, came to an end on 5 August, the opposing Western and Soviet positions had been clarified but not modified, and no agreement had been reached on any matter of substance.¹¹

19. (U) The Disrupted Summit Conference of 1960

In September 1959 Premier Khrushchev, at President Eisenhower's invitation, visited the United States. During a series of personal conversations,¹² he eased international tension for a short while and suspended temporarily the Soviet threat to sign a separate peace treaty with the East Germans. His visit brought about a number of encouraging developments, such as the promulgation of a new U.S.-Soviet cultural agreement in November and the signing of the Antarctic Treaty by the United States, the Soviet Union, and other countries in December. It also led to high-level talks that brought about agreement for a four-power summit conference in Paris, to begin on 16 May 1960. This conference was not held however, because of the so-called U-2 incident, and the spectacular disruption left the general situation more "up in the air"

¹⁰"Statement at Geneva by Foreign Minister Gromyko, on Soviet Proposals Regarding Berlin, May 30, 1959," in Documents on Germany, cited above, pp. 512-21. UNCLAS.

¹¹(1) "Closing Statement by Secretary of State Herter at the Foreign Ministers Meeting in Geneva, August 5, 1959." (2) "Four-Power Communique Issued at the Close of the Foreign Ministers Meeting in Geneva, August 5, 1959." Both in Documents on Germany, cited above, pp. 577-83. Both UNCLAS.

¹²"Joint Communique by the United States and Soviet Union, Regarding Camp David Conversations of President Eisenhower and Premier Khrushchev, September 27, 1959," in Documents on Germany, cited above, pp. 584-5. UNCLAS.

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than ever.¹³

This Soviet outburst climaxed a series of events that had begun with Premier Khrushchev's vitriolic, though unsuccessful, attack upon the Secretary General of the United Nations during the meeting of its General Assembly in September-October 1959. On 11 November 1959 the Soviets had protested West German plans to build a broadcasting station in West Berlin.¹⁴ On 14 November Khrushchev had boasted, in a speech, of the Soviet Union's missile power and had begun an attack on Chancellor Adenauer and the Federal Republic of Germany that had increased in intensity as the date of the summit conference neared. About 1 December he had repeated his threat to sign a separate peace treaty with East Germany. He had reiterated this threat in an address to the Supreme Soviet on 14 January 1960 and in remarks during a visit to Indonesia later in January. On 4 February the Warsaw Pact signatories had issued a formal commitment to sign such a treaty, and on 25 April Premier Khrushchev, in an address at Baku, Azerbaijan, had repeated the threat in harsher terms.¹⁵ Since the Western Allies had continued to stand together effectively in the face of this barrage of threats, they felt that Khrushchev had seized upon the U-2 incident as an excuse for avoiding a plenary conference at which the Soviet point of view could not possibly have prevailed.¹⁶

20. (U) The Vienna Confrontation and Its Aftermath

a. The Meeting. After his inauguration in January 1961, President Kennedy wanted to have a direct exchange of views with Premier Khrushchev.

¹³(1) "Western Communique on the Disruption of the Summit Conference at Paris, May 17, 1960." (2) "Report by Secretary of State Herter to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Events at Paris, May 27, 1960." (3) "Statement by Premier Khrushchev at East Berlin on the U-2 Incident and Disruption of the Paris Summit Conference, May 20, 1960." All in Documents on Germany, cited above, pp. 603-14. All UNCLAS.

¹⁴Dept of State Bul., 4 Jan 60, p. 7 ff. UNCLAS.

¹⁵"Address by Premier Khrushchev at Baku, Azerbaijan, on the German Problem and the Outlook for the Forthcoming Summit Conference, April 25, 1960," in Documents on Germany, cited above, pp. 598-603. UNCLAS.

¹⁶"Report by Secretary of State Herter to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee...May 27, 1960," cited above. UNCLAS.

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The resulting talks took place in Vienna, on 3 and 4 June. "I will tell you now," President Kennedy was to state two days later, "that it was a very somber two days. There was no discourtesy, no loss of tempers, no threat or ultimatum by either side. No advantage or concession was either gained or given; no major decision was either planned or taken; no spectacular progress was either achieved or pretended."¹⁷

b. The Exchange of Notes. At the end of the two days the Premier presented to the President an aide-memoire, on the subject of Germany and Berlin, in which he repeated the Soviet Union's previous demands in very harsh tones.¹⁸

The Soviet Union stands for the immediate conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany . . . The U.S.S.R. deems it necessary . . . to normalize the situation in West Berlin . . . At present the Soviet Government does not see a better way to solve the problem of West Berlin than by transforming it into a demilitarized free city. . . The occupation rights will naturally be terminated upon the conclusion of a German peace treaty, whether it is signed with both German states or only with the German Democratic Republic, within whose territory West Berlin is located. . . The Soviet Government proposes that a peace conference be called immediately, without delay, that a German peace treaty be signed, and that the problem of West Berlin as a free city be solved in this way. . . The Soviet Government considers that not more than 6 months are needed for such negotiations. . . This period is quite sufficient for the G.D.R. and the F.R.G. to establish contacts and to negotiate. . . If the United States does not show that it realizes the necessity of concluding a peace treaty, we shall deplore it, because we shall be obliged to sign a peace treaty . . . with those who wish to sign it. . .

¹⁷ "Report to the Nation by President Kennedy Following His Visit to Paris, Vienna, and London, June 6, 1961," in Documents on Germany, cited above, pp. 646-51. UNCLAS.

¹⁸ "Aide-Memoire from the Soviet Union to the United States, Handed by Premier Khrushchev to President Kennedy at Vienna, June 4, 1961," in Documents on Germany, cited above, pp. 642-5. UNCLAS.

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After consultation with the United Kingdom, France, and the Federal Republic of Germany, the United States replied to the Soviet aide-memoire as follows: 19

The United States . . . supports the clearly expressed wish of the West Berliners that no change be made in the status of their city which would expose them, at once or gradually over a long time, to the domination of the regime which presently controls the surrounding areas What the Soviet Government proposes, unless the Three Powers formally abandon their efforts to reunify Germany, is to determine by itself the fate of Germany through an agreement with the authorities of the so-called "German Democratic Republic!" The United States considers entirely unfounded the claims that this unilateral act could deprive the other three participants in the joint occupation of Berlin of their basic rights in the city It is evident that the present status of the city does not constitute any threat to peace The immediate threat to peace arises from the announced intention of the Soviet Government to present the three Western Powers with a de facto situation based on the false assumption that they would no longer be entitled to remain in Berlin or to have free access thereto. The United States considers the exercise of its rights together with the British and French Allies, in order to maintain the freedom of over two million people in West Berlin, a fundamental political and moral obligation. . . . It hopes . . . that . . . the Soviet Government will renounce any idea of a fait accompli which, as noted, would have unforeseeable consequences.

c. Presidential Authority for Buildup of U.S. Military Forces.
Seven weeks after returning from Vienna, President Kennedy informed the nation that "so long as the Communists insist that they are preparing to end by themselves unilaterally our rights in West Berlin and our commitments to its people, we must be prepared to defend those rights

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"Note from the United States to the Soviet Union, Replying to the Soviet Aide-Memoire Handed to President Kennedy at Vienna, July 17, 1961," in Documents on Germany, cited above, pp. 681-7. UNCLAS.

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attend the Billy Graham religious meetings held just inside West Berlin. When the employment of almost 5,000 East German police to guard the borders around West Berlin, the construction of new fences on the French Sector/East Zone border, the dismantling of the pedestrian bridge across the Tetlow canal, and the drafting of members of the "Free German Youth" to assist the East Berlin Transportation Police in making S-Bahn checks at the intra-city crossing points proved equally ineffective, the East German regime announced without warning, on 12 August, that all except 13 of the existing 120 border-crossing points between the Soviet and Western Allied sectors of Berlin would be closed, effective immediately, to both vehicular and pedestrian passage in either direction. On 12-13 August the regime began to exercise strict border controls and to turn back hundreds of refugees. During the night East German police, armored cars, and tanks were deployed along the entire border of the Soviet sector. Workers erected barbed-wire barricades and shortly thereafter began the construction of a high cement-block wall, with only a few openings, that eventually cut off the Soviet sector and its inhabitants from the rest of Berlin. A series of decrees prohibited East Germans and East Berliners from entering West Berlin and forced more than 50,000 to give up their jobs there. Within 48 hours the flow of refugees was reduced to about 200 per day. Although the Soviet forces attempted to avoid the appearance of being involved, by 15 August three Soviet divisions had apparently established a ring around Berlin, and Soviet supervisory elements and backup troops were observed to be within the city.²²

c. U.S. Counteraction. The foregoing illegal acts, the West Berliners' demand for positive counteraction, and a statement by West Berlin's Governing Mayor, Willi Brandt, that he would welcome a strengthening of the U.S. garrison in Berlin, led President Kennedy and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on 18 August, to order a reinforced battle group, with appropriate artillery and engineer units, to be sent to Berlin as a concrete political and psychological demonstration of the U.S. attitude. Thus the 1st Battle Group, 18th Infantry, 8th Division moved to Berlin, over the Helmstedt-Berlin Autobahn, on 19-20 August. Concurrently, the President appointed General Lucius D. Clay (Retired), former United States Military Governor, as his special military adviser in Berlin, and stationed him there. Moreover, the strength of the U.S. Army forces in Europe was increased by about

²²(1) Cable SX-4827, CINCUSAREUR to distr, 15 Aug 61. SECRET.

(2) For a detailed account of the August crisis and the building of the Wall, see USAREUR Ann Hist, 1961, pp. 32-5. TS (info used SECRET). Both Gp-1.

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40,700 by the end of 1961, and the Air Force was strengthened correspondingly. Equipment for two additional Army divisions was "prepositioned" in Europe and, a 2-division force aggregating 51,000 was prepared in the United States to move to Europe at short notice. A test made at the end of 1961 showed that the force could be moved overseas and be operational within 10-14 days, and the United States was prepared to take such action if necessary.²³

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74. (S) Status At End of 1961

(S) Through the barricading and border-crossing restrictions that began

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- ¹⁹(1) USAREUR Ann Hist, 1960, pp. 55-8. TS (info used SECRET).
Gp-1. (2) Cable COBU-445, USCIB to CINCUSAREUR, 23 Sep 60. FOUO.

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on 12 August 1961,²⁰ Western ~~German~~ military personnel, who before August had been able to enter East Berlin at any one of 120 crossing points, were restricted to the single entrance on Friedrichstrasse, from the American sector. This crossing, which the U.S. Berlin Command manned continuously with a military police detachment and which soon became known to Americans as Checkpoint Charlie, had to be used also by all Western Allied civilians, including personnel of the diplomatic corps.²¹ There were no crossing points for East German or East Berlin residents.

(S) The Western Allies meanwhile continued to assert their rights of access to East Berlin and of movement within the entire city. However, in mid-October U.S. military personnel failed in an attempt to gain access to East Berlin via a crossing point other than Friedrichstrasse. Later in the month, the East German demand that U.S. personnel wearing civilian clothing produce identification documents before entering East Berlin led to threats of military action, as Soviet and U.S. tanks faced each other across Checkpoint Charlie. On 7 November, therefore, CINCUSAREUR directed that all U.S. military personnel entering East Berlin wear uniforms, and that dependents and civilian personnel having an official relationship with any agency of the U.S. Government abstain from entering East Berlin.²²

(U) By the end of 1961, the wall dividing Berlin had been reinforced and topped with barbed wire, and the flow of refugees into West Berlin had been stopped completely except in scattered instances. Only seven crossing points remained open. American, British, and French personnel were still restricted to Checkpoint Charlie; citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany could enter East Berlin at two points; and the small number of West Berliners who worked in East Berlin and held a special pass could enter at four others. There were still no crossing points for East Berlin residents, and the more than 50,000 commuters who had held regular jobs in West Berlin could no longer report for work.

²⁰ See Chapter 3, pp. 31-3. SECRET. Gp-1.

²¹ (1) Berlin - August 13, cited above, p. 48. (2) Heinrich Sieglar, Von der Gescheiterten Gipfelkonferenz Mai 1960 zur Berlinkonferenz August 1961 (Bonn-Vienna-Zurich, 1961), pp. 112-3. Both UNCLAS. (3) USAREUR Ann Hist, 1961, p. 48. TS (info used SECRET). Gp-1. (4) Cable AEBGC-D-247, Berlin Comd to CINCUSAREUR, 26 Sep 61. SECRET. Gp-4. (5) Stars & Stripes (Eur. ed.), 14 Aug 61, pp. 1, 24. UNCLAS.

²² USAREUR Ann Hist, 1961, pp. 34-54. TS (info used SECRET). Gp-1.

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Around the 110-kilometers of "no man's land" that separated West Berlin from the Soviet Zone, there were 157 booms, barricades, barbed wire fences, and earthen walls.²³

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- ²³(1) Jorn Donner, Report from Berlin (Bloomington, 1961), p. 60.
(2) Berlin - August 13, cited above, p. 48. Both UNCLAS.

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